

Safe Patient Handling: The 7 Deadly Sins of Lifting



1. Lifting without thinking. Do not lift spontaneously. Think before you act. If you lift without assessing the entire lift and your transfer scenario in advance, you risk injury to yourself and patient.

2. Overestimating your capabilities. Male or female, in shape or out of shape, don't overestimate your personal strength. Don't underestimate your susceptibility to injury because every caregiver is at risk.

3. Using poor body mechanics. Every time you maneuver a patient, even when using a mechanical lift, you risk incurring a musculoskeletal injury. Understand good body mechanics and use sound ergonomic practices on basis...even when relying on mechanical devices to do the heavy lifting.

4. Failure to consider obstacles. Clear a pathway before you attempt to transfer a patient. By attempting to maneuver around obstacles—wet floor, medical equipment, furniture, etc.—you risk injuring your patient and yourself due to unanticipated twisting movements.

5. Reluctance to impose on co-worker. Whenever you need another person—even when using an assistance device—ask for one. Be sure to closely coordinate your activities whenever 2 or more caregivers are involved in a transfer procedure.

6. Inadequate training. Today's lifting equipment is carefully designed to prevent injuries to patients and caregiver ***assuming it's used properly***. Don't guess how a piece of equipment works; refer to your training manual or the manufacturer's recommendations for operation.

7. Hurrying. This is the deadliest of all sins. Most caregivers who resist the use of lift equipment do so because they do not want to take the time to locate the proper device and using it according to accepted procedures. Take the time to get the equipment—avoid paying for your mistake for the rest of your life.